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#### I. STATEMENT BY DR. KARL GRUBER, AUSTRIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO THE "BIG FOUR" DEPUTIES ON FEBRUARY 28th, 1949.

The statement made by the Yugoslav delegate consists of three parts which, therefore, should be dealt with separately, namely: The demand for the cession of Austrian territory, the protection of the Slovene-speaking population and claims of an economic nature.

1. As far as the demands of the first category are concerned, I may confine myself to refer to my statement at the London Conference of the Deputies on 28th April, 1948. I cannot add anything new to it. Its essence is that the frontier line between Yugoslavia and Austria has been fixed on the grounds of a free, internationally controlled plebiscite and that Hitler's assault on Austria can on no account constitute a legal basis for reopening that issue.

The Yugoslav delegate has now mentioned the possibility of a compromise with regard to the frontier problem. However, I could not accept the opinion that a claim, which basically must be regarded as unfounded, can by any reduction become a "compromise". Thus deprived of its ethnological criterion, the basis of any such territorial claim could finally only be found in the intention of dismembering Austria, in order to give Yugoslavia some kind of political satisfaction. Human beings, however, cannot against their will be moved for political reasons like pawns on a chessboard.

Austria, whose restoration has been solemnly pledged in the Moscow Declaration, has heavily suffered from the liberation-occupation for which she has already been subjected to extraordinary sacrifices. It is up to the Occupying Powers to bring these sacrifices into conformity with their international conscience.

The Austrian people, at any rate, look upon the continued denial of their freedom as an international injustice. An amount of almost 5 billion schillings, i.e., 500 million dollars, has been paid by Austria in 4 years for the cost of occupation, not to mention other burdens she had and still has to endure in this connection. This alone goes certainly beyond what might be regarded as a fair burden, taking into account the responsibility of a country, which, after all, was invaded. The Austrian people, therefore, could never consent to a solution, which would put an end to this occupation of many years by destroying the integrity of their territory.

At any rate I am instructed by the Austrian Parliament and by my Government to declare anew and unmistakably that these constitutional bodies would never ratify a treaty which does not maintain the inviolability of the Austrian frontiers.

2. As far as the protection of linguistic minorities in Austria is concerned I can give the assurance that their rights are fully safeguarded by the Austrian constitution. I may be allowed to refrain from submitting further documentation to this conference, documentation which would furnish full proof that Austria, up to her annexation by Hitlerite Germany in 1938, has strictly observed the stipulations of its constitution as well as of the Treaty of St. Germain in this respect. I doubt whether there exist minorities anywhere in Europe, enjoying similar cultural, political and economic liberties to those accorded to the Austrians of Slovene tongue - liberties, which even allow them unrestricted intercourse with the very country, which demands

territorial cessions from Austria.

Do not the very assertions of the Yugoslav delegate lead his own arguments "ad absurdum", when it is in the same sentence purported that the Slovenes in Carinthia are on the one hand oppressed and their liberties curtailed, and on the other hand stated, that their organisations give proof of their intensified activities of an independent political, economic and cultural nature.

I should like to avail myself of the opportunity of correcting Dr. Bebler's statement that Mr. Wedenig, the Provincial Governor of Carinthia has threatened the Slovenes by shaking his fist at them. According to the record, all he said was that the people of Carinthia would repulse any terrorist attempt with their bare fists. Besides, the Austria of today is under control of the Allied Powers, which are represented on the spot by tens of thousands of observers. We call on them, in particular on the locally competent Occupying Power, as principal witnesses, to prove that the Yugoslav assertions with regard to oppression of the Slovene population do not correspond with the actual facts.

In paragraph 2 and 4 of his proposals the delegate of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia has advanced further so-called compromise proposals, which apparently have the same target, they are interconnected; they both aim at the guarantee for the Slovene population to preserve and develop freely their cultural individualities. Therefore they have to be studied together.

In the 1934 census not more than 174,000 persons registered as non-German speaking in Austria as a whole. Of these only 17% were domiciled in Carinthia.

The Yugoslav delegate asks for different kinds of protection for various groups of Slav or Slovene-speaking Austrians, demands which would create differences in the legal status of these linguistic groups.

I venture first to analyze part 2 of these proposals. There, nothing less is demanded than the creation of an autonomous region. So far Dr. Bebler has not defined what region he has in mind. I wish to explain why such a solution would be unacceptable to Austria and why it would be impracticable and ineffective.

Take, first of all, Carinthia as such, a region which the Yugoslav Delegation in previous statements tried to describe to us as a former Slovene province. Carinthia enjoys self-administration to the highest degree provided by the Austrian Federal Constitution. Carinthia has her own legislation and Government. To claim autonomy for Carinthia obviously means to make a thrust into empty space.

I now refer to the contested region. The Referendum of 1920 has furnished clear proof that this region in particular is inhabited by a strong German-speaking majority. In other words: if a separate zone would be created, conditions in that zone would not differ from those existing to-day in Carinthia as a whole. And however small such a zone would be created, the result would still remain the same, for the simple reason that, whereas German-speaking and Slovene-speaking Austrians dwell entirely interspersed, there is no political district without a distinct German-speaking majority. In addition, it should not be overlooked that only a negligible part of those Slovene elements, who have cast their vote in 1920 in favor of Yugoslavia, might be willing today to give up Austria as their fatherland. Let us, for instance, examine more closely conditions applying to the one "Bezirkshauptmannschaft" (county), the smallest possible administrative unit. I refer to the district of Voelkermarkt, the most densely Slovene-inhabited district. These are the figures from the 1920 Referendum:

11,700 voted to remain Austrians and only

7,410 voted for incorporation into Yugoslavia.

According to the Census of 1934,

24,907 registered as German-speaking and

10,551 as Slovene-speaking.

The definite pro-Austrian feeling of the population in this region is moreover not due to pressure, as it is attempted to make believe. It is rather the positive realization that Austria may well be the country where the principle "to live and let live" is brought to best practice. Or, as our people used to say: Austria is the country, where everybody may seek happiness in his own way.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the application of such a proposal would only result in a constitutional monster and would, in any case, create a chaos. Nor would it in any way serve the purpose which the Yugoslav Government has apparently at heart, namely the protection of the Slovene-speaking community of Carinthia.



There remains accordingly one logical and feasible solution - and one solution only: To grant protection not just to the minority population dwelling in one specified zone, but to any and every Austrian citizen, wherever domiciled in Austria, who wishes to avail himself or herself of such protection. This also presents a way to avoid any discrimination or classification of the Slovene Austrians, whether living in the frontier regions or elsewhere in Austria. Such a method also meets best the existing ethnical facts. The Austrian constitution foresees sufficient guarantees for the minorities; therefore the Austrian Government sees no necessity for the insertion of additional protective clauses into the present Treaty.

However, in spite of this fundamental conviction, I should like to add this: we regard our future relations with our Yugoslav neighbors as far too important to confine ourselves simply to reject the suggestions, without giving them careful consideration.

I ventured in my previous observations to set out why proposal 2, lacking any ethnical basis, is unworkable. However, if the Yugoslav Government considers that its concern for the fate of the Slovene-speaking minority in Austria could be met only by some kind of international protection, I am expecting my Government to consider the incorporation of the constitutional stipulations referred to, in one form or another, into the Treaty under discussion. But I wish to stress that on no account would it be acceptable to alter the Austrian constitution to an effect by which the integrity of any of the federal states which, in their entity, constitute the Austrian Republic, would be violated.

3. The reasons why Austria refuses to allow her country to be vivisectioned are equally valid for her refusal to accept obligations to payment of reparations. Austria was the first country subjugated and swallowed by Hitlerite Germany. At that time the Big Powers did not move a finger to come to Austria's assistance in her plight, though, most certainly, they would have been in the position to do so. Under these circumstances how can any claim be based on the fact that Austrians were forcibly pressed into the German Wehrmacht. Accordingly, any payment whatsoever of reparations is considered unacceptable by Austria.

In this connection I draw the attention to article 45 of the present Draft Agreement. According to this, Austria is supposed to transfer very considerable assets to the Yugoslav Government. There can be no doubt that transfers of this kind, if agreed to, would constitute obligations to be qualified as pure reparations. According to considered expert opinion, the burden thus imposed on Austria would amount to many hundred million schillings; I do not know, as yet, how the Austrian Parliament will view these clauses. However, I feel safe in anticipating that these clauses represent the limit to which the Austrian Parliament may be expected to be willing to acquiesce to a violation of the principle accepted at Potsdam that Austria should not be called upon to pay reparations.

Dr. Bebler, when addressing the Members of the Foreign Press Association in London, has stressed the need for the development of economic relations between industrial and agrarian countries as the economic relation of the two countries presents itself. Any such desire for the intensification of economic relations between our two countries would meet with the full agreement of the Austrian Government. Suggestions for the expansion of trade relations between Austria and Yugoslavia would be considered with the utmost readiness. I am convinced that Austrian negotiators desirous in the interest of good neighborly relations, to restore the cooperation hampered by past events, would not be guided by narrow-minded considerations.

4. Mr. Bebler in his letter of February 11th, 1949, addressed to the Deputy Foreign Ministers, expresses the satisfaction of his Government and of the people of Yugoslavia at the resumption of the Austrian Treaty talks. Mr. Bebler also expresses the opinion that a favorable conclusion of these negotiations would represent a decisive step towards the re-establishment of normal conditions in Central Europe. Mr. Bebler says, Yugoslavia is prepared to collaborate with the Four Powers to the best of her abilities in finding a basis for an understanding.

I beg to assure the Yugoslav delegate that it is the sincere desire of the Austrian people as a whole, to effectively improve relations with Yugoslavia, relations which have become normal during the past years as may be deduced from the considerable trade exchange already established. I venture to add that, as long as an Austrian Government



was in being, there existed no differences between the two States established after the first World War.

Tendencies to expansion or of Pan-Germanism are alien to the Austrian Government and to the Austrian people. We have but one desire: to contribute our share towards re-establishing peace and cultural progress. And we wish to furnish a proof to the world that a people's position amongst the other peoples of the world can be based effectively on a sound conception of life and a rich cultural heritage without displaying external powers. The newly established Austrian State is not possessed of any Power Complex.

The Yugoslav Government, on the other hand, should understand that there are certain limits to the sacrifices the Austrian people can bear, limits which cannot be transgressed. I will, therefore, appeal to the Yugoslav representative to recognize this realistic basis for an understanding. I am deeply convinced that such a cooperation will achieve excellent results for both people. There is no doubt that an intensive exchange of trade and friendly relationship will serve Yugoslavia's interests much better than something like war-contributions which in the mind of the Austrian people would perpetuate the idea that Yugoslavia has in a difficult time tried to exploit Austria's weak position.

## II. BACKGROUND ON CARINTHIA.

Carinthia, the southernmost province of Austria, constitutes a geographical, historical and economic unit. Geographically, it derives its unity from the structure of a number of valleys and basins, closely connected with one another, which gradually extend eastward into the "Klagenfurter Becken" (Klagenfurt Basin) and are enclosed in great depth by mountainous zones. In the south, the province is clearly separated from Yugoslavia by the steep and inaccessible mountain chain of the "Karawanken". The "Karawanken" frontier has historically been the permanent frontier through the ages - from Roman days to the present time. Since the days of the old Roman Empire and through the entire Middle Ages, Carinthia was always an administrative entity; so it has remained, and has been an integral part of Austria ever since 1335.

The population of Carinthia is of Austrian origin and is Austrian-minded. Ethnologically, like the population in the rest of Austria, it is the result of the merging of various racial strains, so that it is impossible to establish clear-cut racial differences. The people of Carinthia, some of whom speak German and some Slovene, have always lived together peacefully and a strong feeling of provincial solidarity has always dominated their life. For this reason, when the question arose as to who was to be considered an Austrian of Slovene extraction and language, the Austrian Government was guided by the individual personal statement of each Carinthian. Thus, the census of 1934 officially established the number of Slovene-speaking Carinthians as 26,789 or 6.6% of a total population of 405,129. This census was taken on the basis of an individual and entirely free declaration of adherence. In the elections for the Austrian Parliament which took place on November 25th, 1945, more than 90% of the population gave their votes to the three parties which upheld the territorial integrity of Carinthia.

There is no exclusive Slovene territory in Carinthia where the Slovene-speaking minority lives in interspersed settlements. Only in a few districts and boroughs separated from each other do the Slovenes constitute a majority. Of the 249 communities included in the census of 1934 only ten showed a majority of Slovene-speaking people. In view of this situation, the linguistic and cultural rights of the Slovene minority were safeguarded by guaranteeing it the right of individual and national corporations. Between 1920 and 1938 no serious friction arose between the Slovene-speaking population and their German-speaking compatriots. During the 20 years existence of the Austrian Republic no complaints from Carinthian Slovenes ever reached the Council of the League of Nations. In fact, Austria and Denmark were the only countries which gave their minorities no reason to lodge such complaints.

The Slovene-speaking people of Carinthia were and are permitted to use their native language in all dealings with their authorities and courts. The cultural aspirations of the Slovene-speaking Carinthians were encouraged and both the economic and cultural associations founded by the Slovenes were on various occasions aided by the State. Three weekly newspapers and a number of monthlies are available to the

Slovene minority. As to educational matters, Carinthia has had for many years bilingual schools in which Slovene pupils were taught in their native as well as in the German language. The majority of the Slovenes prefer bilingual schools to purely Slovene ones. After Austria's liberation, the Government took a further step in this direction by making bilingual instruction compulsory in bilingual districts for all pupils irrespective of their racial origin. This measure has already been put into practice in more than 100 schools.

Carinthia is an economic unit. Lower Carinthia, the very part claimed by Yugoslavia, is indispensable as a source of food for the province. Nearly half of Carinthia's harvest comes from its south-eastern area and the Klagenfurt Basin. Lower Carinthia is also the main producer of buckwheat, pulses and vegetables. On the other hand, the farm districts of Lower Carinthia and the Klagenfurt Basin lack the necessary mountain pastures to provide dairy cattle with grazing land. For centuries, large cattle herds from the Klagenfurt Basin have been driven in the early spring to the Gurktaler Alps and to the Saualp and Koralp to return to the farms in the valley only in the fall. Important deposits of lead and lignite are located in the region claimed by Yugoslavia. This region includes the Woerthersee, Carinthia's most valuable tourist attraction.

Carinthia also is an international railroad center. The communication triangle Klagenfurt-Villach-St. Veit dominates rail traffic between the Danube and the Adriatic in the north-south direction, and between south-eastern and western Europe in the east-west direction. The severance of these railroad lines would not only disrupt local communications but cause great damage to economic life in central and eastern Europe.

Furthermore, the question of the Austro-Yugoslav border was already settled in 1920 in conformity with democratic principles and the right of self-determination. A plebiscite provided for by the Treaty of St. Germain, was held in Carinthia on October 10th, 1920, under international supervision. From the beginning of 1919 until the day of the plebiscite the territory concerned was administered by Yugoslavia. This is conclusive evidence that no influence or pressure could be brought to bear on the population by Austria, whereas the Yugoslav administration had many chances to exert such pressure. The plebiscite was prepared and carried out by an international commission in an absolutely fair and impartial manner, a fact which was expressly recorded in the commission's final protocol and explicitly recognized by the Yugoslav Government. When examining the result of the plebiscite, account must be taken of the fact that it was conducted in zone I only, i.e., in the southern part of the territory claimed by Yugoslavia, where the Slovene-speaking Carinthians form a larger minority than in the northern part. The Yugoslav delegation at St. Germain had succeeded in making this arrangement at the last moment because it was apparent that a plebiscite in the whole of the Klagenfurt Basin would undoubtedly have resulted in an overwhelming majority against Yugoslavia. Despite those conditions which were most unfavorable to Austria, the plebiscite held on October 10th, 1920 resulted in a majority for Austria of 59.04%.



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